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ABSTRACT

Dependable Strengths Articulation Process (DSAP) is a self-development process designed to facilitate positive self-constructions and improved personal functioning through a systematic intervention that enables participants to recognize, articulate, communicate and use their Dependable Strengths. Because it is a peer-assisted process, each participant experiences a degree of interdependency. In a seminar or workshop, short exercises are given to illuminate some ways in which research, technology and financial changes impact each person's life. Participants recall experiences which have come close to being self-actualizing and which are named "good experiences." Good experiences are prioritized for top importance. In support teams, while one participant describes how he/she went about making the good experiences happen, the others write down strengths they hear the person describing. Participants write reports describing how they operate at their best, what strengths are used, and how they combine in career developing activities. In shorter exercises, participants study past achievements and accomplishments. The outcomes of DSAP indicate that it is at least as effective and less costly to individualize such counseling in groups. Perhaps a new time has arrived for career and life planning. (An appendix provides a guide for an intervention process which teaches students to appreciate their Dependable Strengths and the potential value of this knowledge for their future development. Seven stages are described.) (ABL)

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THE DEPENDABLE STRENGTHS ARTICULATION PROCESS: HOW IT WORKS

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THE DEPENDABLE STRENGTHS ARTICULATION PROCESS:

HOW IT WORKS

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Presented at the Annual Convention of

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March 17, 1989. Boston, Massachusetts

The Dependable Strengths Articulation Process (DSAP) is a systematic intervention which helps a person identify her customary ways of applying herself when she achieves, accomplishes, feels alive and well.

DSAP was first created for use with returning military officers seeking changed careers after World War II, then for university students and the Harvard Business School (Alumni Placement Manual) in 1948 and in 1958 for career planning by members of the American Management Association. Its outcomes earned three White House commendations. DSAP is now being studied at the University of Washington College of Education and adapted for use by teachers with their elementary, junior and high school students.

In earlier forms DSAP proved significant in translating the skills of homemakers into employable terminology; in preventing dropouts at Madison (N.J.) Township High School; in helping minority high school dropouts to get jobs quickly; in speeding re-employment of technologically and structurally displaced blue and white collar workers, professionals and executives (outplacement); in expediting employment of returning Peace Corps volunteers (Irish, 1988); in enabling 60% of men and women long on public welfare in Paterson, N.J. to get jobs within two months and hold them for at least 9 months.

Ten years ago teachers in the Edmonds School District (Washington) completed a DSAP-type program and applied it in their classes. They reported more respect between

students, better method for improving self-image and "I found that my students had done more and had more talent than I previously imagined."

In a companion paper, McMurrer (1989) refers to four recent DSAP projects which involved over a eighty men, women, teachers and youth who completed before and after psychological tests. These show significant positive changes in self-esteem, motivation to achieve, adult sense of responsibility and view of oneself.

It appears that the person who comes to know his Dependable Strengths gains greater control over how he develops and adapts to change.

Forster (1989), in his "Rationale of the Dependable Strengths Articulation Process", discusses a conceptual model and cites supportive literature which undergirds the DSAP.

The DSAP experience reveals the need to accept and live with the accelerating rate of change (Haldane, 1988). It also reveals an element of timelessness in the way each participant has been developing her skills, talents, traits, capabilities (strengths). Because it is a peer-assisted process each participant experiences a degree of interdependency: others help the person to recognize her strengths, and she helps others to do the same. They perceive how they can use DSAP ideas to help others bring out the best that is in them. They work in teams, and members of each team schedule after-the-class meetings at which they will help each other to develop their strengths and otherwise accommodate to new situations.

By working with each other they see that a person's Dependable Strengths probably began to show in childhood, often in the very early years; and they see that as strengths develop they may be called by different names or combined in different ways (Haldane, 1975). For instance, skill with words and competitiveness are needed to help a child win a spelling bee; the same skills are also essential for the success of a trial attorney. Another exercise in the process illuminates how concern with each other's strengths enables a team to be more effective and also have a better time together.

Here in brief is how the process works in a complete seminar or workshop. Short exercises are given to illuminate some ways in which research, technology and financial

changes impact each person's life, right now. Then they recall experiences which have come close to being self-actualizing. These are named "Good Experiences," defined as: "something you feel you did well; that you also enjoyed doing and are proud of" (Haldane & Haldane, 1984). They are asked about such experiences of the past few years, then some early-life Good Experiences, then others. Each person lists twelve or more, a few words for each; about ten are then identified as the greatest ones in the person's own opinion. Seven of the ten are prioritized for top importance.

In support teams usually made up of four participants each in turn describes how he went about making his top five Good Experiences happen; the others listen carefully and write down a list of strengths they hear the person describing. When all five have been described, the others read aloud their lists and give them to the "upfront" person. These lists prime the person for deeper search into the Good Experiences for Dependable Strengths he possesses. He does this with the aid of a Dependable Strengths Profile Chart, and a reality-test process (Haldane, Haldane & Martin, 1980). These are the person's most highly motivated strengths.

The person then has facts which permit her to write a report describing how she operates at her best, what strengths she uses, and how they combine in high performance, enjoyable and career developing activities (Haldane, 1988). In essence this description and those experiences should show the level of effectiveness to which she has developed, what she has learned from life to this point and her directions of growth. This approach gives value to both paid and unpaid work, as well as to activities like education, play, hobbies and homemaking.

The team then goes to work on each report in turn with the purpose of helping each writer to be more accurate and precise as well as to be better at responding to questions about her strengths. A manual guide in the appendix of this paper outlines the seven stages of the DSAP.

While there are shorter, special purpose DSAP workshops, this 24-hour process - often spread over two or three weeks (or in classroom-hour segments) - immerses a person in details

of the best experiences of his life. It has him studying his achievements and accomplishments in order to make sure he can do them again, and perhaps better the next time. This is diametrically different from the socially-approved process of "learning from one's mistakes."

This disciplined study helps him to perceive how he might be better able to manage his strengths and future so as to have more Good Experiences in it, more growth in it, more good relationships in it, and also contribute to his community, work and personal life.

How participants react to the process is indicated in their written evaluations: More than 85 percent of twelve hundred recent participants reported they learned new things about themselves, they had greater self-confidence, and their new knowledge would help them get along better with others. After a DSAP-type workshop in 1978 for seniors from 9 high schools, 74 of 79 said they had identified skills and interests they did not realize they had. Of those in Job Finding DSAP workshops more than 90 percent said it would help them have better interviews and get jobs faster.

Titles of seminars and workshops which use DSAP include: Career Planning; Bring Out the Best in Others and in Yourself; Job Finding Power; Clergy Career Assessment and Renewal; Team Building; Increasing Self-Esteem in the Classroom; and Identify Your Gifts for Ministry. Three-credit courses are offered to teachers by the College of Education, University of Washington. Some seminar-workshops are limited to one-day; these are reported as shortened ones and require additional time for preparation, reading, written work and support team assignments.

In the sixties, the author discussed with Abram Maslow the possibility that Success Factor Analysis (a precursor of DSAP) might help a person to recognize the skills she would use in a self-actualizing job. He affirmed that it would.

Ten years later Hans Selye discussed what kinds of stress a person would feel who applied himself to activities which centrally use Dependable Strengths. "That would be Eustress," he said. Eustress is the kind of stress a person feels when on vacation, when doing something enjoyably.

On an experiential plane the author has worked with professional, educational, government and private organizations and thousands of individuals over more than forty years. Some personal observations may therefore be relevant. Most colleges and universities that teach career planning use a variation of earlier forms of DSAP, often using the book, "What Color is Your Parachute?" by Richard Bolles. They usually teach one-on-one counseling rather than career counseling in groups.

The outcomes of DSAP programs indicate that it is at least as effective and less costly to individualize such counseling in groups. Perhaps a new time has arrived for career and life planning.

It is clear that DSAP clarifies which skills, talents, strengths, a person is most motivated to use. In gaining this awareness the person gains greater freedom to develop one or more of his Dependable Strengths or combine them in different ways so as to enable him to adapt to changes as they occur. This awareness permits him to feel more secure in times of change, to choose more wisely the way to go, to identify new goals that are appropriate, and relate to others with less conflict and more satisfaction. Knowledge gained through the Dependable Strengths Articulation Process deepens a person's feeling of responsibility for how his life is progressing, as well as his perception of how to change for the better what is undesirable (Haldane, 1988).

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MANUAL GUIDE

for the

DEPENDABLE STRENGTHS ARTICULATION PROCESS (DSAP)

[Appendix to: The Dependable Strengths Articulation Process (DSAP): How it Works]

Purpose: This manual guide conveys the essence of a 24-hour intervention process which teaches students to appreciate their Dependable Strengths and the potential value of this knowledge for their future development. The intervention process includes approximately 24 hours of class or workshop time. Detailed discussion is found in Haldane and Haldane (1984) and in Haldane, Haldane and Martin (1980).

DSAP is based on the experiences and developments of Bernard Haldane, PhD., APGA-AACD member since 1946, author, counselor, founder of an international career counseling institution, present Advisory Board Chairman of The Dependable Strengths Project at the College of Education, University of Washington. (Richard Bolles' What Color is Your Parachute popularized an early version of DSAP.) The DSAP is being studied and developed at the Clinical Service and Research Center in the College of Education, University of Washington.

Men, women, youth and children engage in the DSAP to gain knowledge of their Dependable Strengths. Outcomes include the enhancement of their self-esteem, motivation to achieve, and control over what happens in their lives. The DSAP consists of 7 stages, and ranges in length from one-day to four days.

Stage One - Recognizing Obstacles to be Overcome

Stage Two - Listening to Experiences to Find Skills-Talents-Capabilities-Traits (Strengths)

Stage Three - Recording a Profile of Possible Dependable Strengths

Stage Four - Testing the Reality of Dependable Strengths Activities

Stage Five - Articulation of Dependable Strengths

Stage Six - Finding Support

Stage Seven - Applying What is Learned

Stage One - Recognizing Obstacles to be Overcome

This orientation consists of student involvement in a number of exercises. These reveal societal traditions and practices which tend to limit their potential, and illustrate how some have overcome those traditions and practices.

These include an attitudinal tilt which encourages people to study what they don't do well, while discouraging them from the study and improvement of what they do do well. Also, the use of "cover words" and pigeonhole procedures which tend to restrict one's opportunities, such as job titles, job descriptions, application forms, annual evaluation systems.

Stage Two - Listening to Experiences to Find Skills-Talents-Capablities-Traits (Strengths)

In this stage they help each other practice listening to experiences which are likely to apply Dependable Strengths. Then they focus on a demonstration, using one volunteer, to show how a person begins to identify his or her Dependable Strengths. This involvment exercise has them listening as the volunteer describes a number of her Good Experiences, ones when she did something well - in her own opinion, that she also enjoyed doing and is proud of. Other students make a list of skills, talents, capabilities, traits (strengths) which they hear the volunteer has applied.

After the volunteer describes four or five Good Experiences the Teacher has students call off what they've written down, and writes them on a large flipchart page. Then all discuss what was learned. All students are then organized into groups of four; each group provides opportunity for every one of the students to experience a similiar start on identifying his or her Dependable Strengths.

Younger children create their own "Strengths Book." They draw pictures of their Good Experiences, discuss with other children what their pictures represent, and list skills-talents-

capabilities-strengths that were used in those activities. Other children also make skill suggestions which the child may or may not also write in her book....A series of 50-minute classes helps each child to perceive some repeated strengths.

Stage Three - Recording a Profile of Possible Dependable Strengths

Students in grades 10, 11 and 12 (and adults) can record on a chart with seven columns which skills/talents, etc. have been used most strongly in each of one's top seven Good Experiences. The most-checked skills/talents which can be traced back to childhood may be called Dependable Strengths.

Stage Four - Testing the Reality of Dependable Strengths Activities

Students re-examine the process to this point and choose six or more activities which combine the use of their Dependable Strengths. One-by-one these activities are proven-in (or proven out) by a systematic process of writing down descriptions of experiences which show their highest level of effectiveness at each different activity.

Stage Five - Articulation of Dependable Strengths

This takes two forms - written and spoken. First is a draft Report written by each student on the Strengths clearly demonstrated and, in a second section, descriptions of experiences which applied these strengths. In small teams, students listen and discuss each draft Report to help each other be more clear and effective on what is written.

The spoken part is difficult, despite the fact that they have written down many of their Good Experiences, skills or talents they used then, and also have described some of them to others. The difficulty is because people who talk about what they do well are frequently declared to be braggarts and conceited, told they are trying to do a snow job. In truth they are trying to admit to their good points in the same way as society urges them to admit to their

weaknesses. This effort helps them speak about the strengths they possess and can prove they have been developing - without feeling that they are bragging.

Stage Six - Finding Support

Continued practice with a Suppport Team does two important things. First, it keeps each person bringing out the best in others as well as in him or herself...Second, an interpersonal interest and concern develops as participants provide mutually beneficial suggestions about relationships, readings and ways to grow in effectiveness and satisfaction. The Support Team also models cooperativeness, community, and adaptation to changes that are coming ever more frequently. The problems and stresses of life may be eased when brought into the ambiance of one's Support Team.

Stage Seven - Applying What is Learned

Application takes several forms, depending on the purpose and program design. For instance: a) when the program design is Job Finding or Career Changing, students practice a Job Magnet process which enables them to attract job offers, job interview management and salary negotiations procedures. They field test what they have practiced, and weekly Support Team meetings are set up to help each person be most effective. b) when the program design includes team building, members in each of several teams relate their Dependable Strengths to a project they plan, and the team reaches agreement on who does what based on the unique contributions each can make.

In The Works:

Focus of the Dependable Strengths Articulation Process now is on K-12, and how DSAP helps teachers respond to the National Career Development Guidelines (1989, National Occupation Information Coordinating Committee). We are planning two programs for teachers and students in public high schools in the 1989-90 school year.

The Dependable Strengths Project is developing DSAP packages (manuals and forms) for use with different groups and for different purposes. These include Career Planning, Job Finding, Building Self-Esteem in the Classroom, Team Building, Gifts for Ministry, Career Assessment and Renewal, and shortened versions of the DSAP programs.

The DSAP has demonstrated its effectiveness as a significant and positive intervention for career planning, job finding, career changing, improved interpersonal relations, team building and the prevention of high school drop-outs.

For more information, write or call:

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